THE MAGIC OF ACTION
15 WAYS TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION AND GET MORE OF WHAT YOU REALLY WANT.
Ever licked a nasty, slimy toad? What if you don’t have a choice? What if you have to hold a great big, slimy, fly infested toad and lick it from the tip of its nose all the way up its bumpy back to the base of its toes?

Now suppose for a moment that I told you it had to be done within two months. Would you lick it today, tomorrow or perhaps wait and do it exactly in two months? Given the choice, most people would probably choose the latter, delaying right to the very last minute.

However, putting off our most important, albeit challenging tasks to the last minute can do more harm than good because now this toad is going to be your new best friend. It’s going to follow you everywhere you go. It’s going to sit beside you when you drive; sleep next to you at night; stare at you when you’re in the shower; sit with you at meals; and perch itself on your desk at work. After a few days, its nauseating smell is going to attract a whole new troop of smelly toads that will also follow you around, completely absorbing all your energy and mental bandwidth. Now imagine, one toad becomes thirty, all piled up on your shoulders and head, weighing you down and making you feel squashed and squished. By delaying in licking the toad in the first place, you actually end up worse off.
What else is going to be impacted in your life because you haven’t licked this nasty thing yet? You probably won’t be a lot of fun to be around. Your anxiety level will go up. You may become miserable, stressed or depressed. You’ll likely be distracted and preoccupied by your slimy, green friends. You will probably become irritable with your family and friends – you may even resent them, rather than blaming the toad for your troubles. A lack of sleep, high blood pressure and poor eating will undoubtedly cause health issues too.

Let’s move forward to exactly two months later when you can’t delay any longer. What happens? Your heart races, your palms become sweaty, your body shakes nervously and your mouth is dry – you feel downright horrible. But nevertheless, you get yourself together and lick the nasty toad, proclaiming immediately thereafter, “It wasn’t all that bad.” That’s right, “It wasn’t that bad!”

All that suffering for two entire months and yet when it comes right down to it and you lick the toad, you feel great. So great, you not only wish you had done it sooner, but you also start licking more toads, gaining the momentum I call – The Magic of Action.

We all have nasty toads in our lives – every problem, issue and situation you would prefer to avoid but must eventually deal with is a toad. They come in all shapes and sizes but you cannot hide from them, even if you try and set them aside. In fact, just when you hope they go away, they come back bigger, smellier and slimier.
And unfortunately, toads don't just affect our personal lives; they impact our performance at work too. Lingering toads cause unnecessary distractions and exhaust half your energy because you can’t stop thinking about them. In business this can be detrimental. What if you have 100 toads bogging you down and are in a crucial client meeting with a colleague, but your colleague has no toads whatsoever? Who’s going to be more energized and focused with the client? That's right, your colleague.

Inevitably, many business leaders tell me that one of the reasons they are successful is because they don’t procrastinate but yet when we evaluate lingering issues taking up space in their business and personal lives, their procrastination list is actually quite large. Whether you call it procrastination, a backlog of frustrating things or irritating distractions that simply waste time and mental energy, the fact is, we all have toads weighing us down – sometimes we just don’t recognize them.

For business leaders, the lingering issues extend beyond just you – your teams have festering issues too. Can you really expect to get the best from your team if they are consumed and bogged down by toads? What do you think this mental rotting does to your employees’ mood and creative mindset, not to mention their productivity levels? I’m sure their intellectual and emotional bandwidth could be better used helping to drive the business forward. This is why action is the only way to purge toads, in life and in business.

Whether you’re a CEO, entrepreneur, business leader or employee, this eBook will teach you 15 ways to overcome procrastination, helping you free up bandwidth for higher value priorities, improve productivity and get more of what you really want in life.
THE COST OF PROCRASTINATION

The cost of procrastination is staggering, not just in terms of the financial impact but also the impact on our emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. In one study by Basex, a New York based business research firm, researchers discovered that unnecessary interruptions at work are costing the American economy $650 billion in terms of lost productivity and innovation.¹

There is also a huge cost on our health due to stress and anxiety, our finances, our career growth and our relationships. Procrastination also affects your self-esteem and your confidence because of the guilt you feel when you lose personal productivity. If you say you are going to do something and then repeatedly fail to deliver, what message are you telling yourself?

Research by Joseph Ferrari, PhD, a professor of psychology and Vincent dePaul Distinguished Professor at DePaul University in Chicago indicates that 20 per cent of Americans are chronic procrastinators, delaying in every aspect of their life: home, work, school and in relationships. According to Ferrari, who is a leading researcher in the study of procrastination, “we are a nation of doers but we are also, like people from other industrialized nations, a people of waiters. Let’s place the 20 percent in perspective – that’s higher than the number of people diagnosed with clinical depression or phobias, two tendencies many people know about.” ²


"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

- Mark Twain
SWAMPED BY TOADS

Nasty toads are everywhere but as Albert Einstein once said, “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” Don’t blind yourself to great possibilities by hiding from toads. The truth is, everyone procrastinates, it’s just that some people procrastinate more than others and often in different areas of their lives.

For example, most entrepreneurs are great at driving action in their business, but where do you think they procrastinate? Just ask their spouse – it’s at home. First, they are not home much because their focus is on the business, and second, when they are home, they are still focused on the business. Here are the top toads, I have seen with clients in their business and personal lives:

- Giving performance reviews or feedback to employees who are not meeting expectations
- Changing roles for employees
- Firing or demoting employees
- Saying no
- Dealing with unresolved conflicts
- Asking customers for feedback
- Calling customers for money
- Letting go of headache-causing clients
- Thanking customers for their business
- Telling a client about a mistake you made
- Tolerating late or incorrect orders
- Closing or selling a business or part of a business
- Ending or renegotiating a joint venture
- Booking vacations and taking time to recharge
- Scheduling doctors appointments
- Spending quality time with loved ones
- Making decisions to do with your family, home and finances
- Unresolved conflicts or arguments
- Seeking a therapist for issues that continue to haunt you
- Planning for retirement
- Taxes and wills
- Dealing with clutter around your home
- Handling home repairs
- Working on personal relationships
FEARING THE TOAD – THE TWO TOP CAUSES OF PROCRASTINATION

1. **People fear dealing with their problems or toads.** As a result of being scared, they ignore the issues, which only causes them to come back bigger and nastier. Here are six common fears from “Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill.³

   **Six common fears**
   - Poverty
   - Criticism
   - Ill health
   - Loss of love
   - Old age
   - Death

   Just remember, fear can be a self-fulfilling prophecy – what you focus on will often come to you and that’s why it is so important to confront your toads head on.

2. **People like to rebel,** particularly if they feel they have to do something because someone is making, or suggesting, they should do it.

The Weight of 30 Toads

There is a huge link between procrastination and the coping mechanisms resulting from the stress of procrastination including smoking, overeating, not eating enough, alcohol, drugs, exercise, oversleeping, gambling, withdrawal, mental illness, shopping and compulsions. These only lead to making an already stressful situation worse.

In an interview produced by the American Psychological Association, Dr. Ferrari shares, “We have found some links with chronic procrastination and personality challenges like ADHD, passive-aggressive tendencies, revenge, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other areas… But let’s remember that while everyone puts off an occasional task, it is the person who does that habitually, always with plausible “excuses” that has issues to address. For those chronic procrastinators, it is not a time management issue – it is a maladaptive lifestyle.”

In the diagram below, the green zone illustrates the regular amount of stress that people have; yellow is the maximum that we can handle; and red is over the top. If you have up to twenty toads in your life you are in the regular zone; 21-30 and you are in the yellow zone; 31 or more and you are really stressed out – it’s time to take serious action; and if you have a 100 or more toads standing on your head, all you’re seeing is the ground.

For business leaders, underperformance is the inevitable consequence when toads bury employees. And while many people and leaders keep toads around because they feel like a buffer (or safe cushion) from bigger juicier things, by gradually taking care of every problem, issue and situation you would prefer to avoid – no matter how massive the list – you and your team can gain a fresh and unfettered perspective that will infuse you with productive energy.
1. WRITE DOWN YOUR TOADS

It’s imperative that you extract the toads out of your head and write them down on paper. Invest 10 minutes to write down all the things that you need to do but would prefer to avoid. Start by coming up with two or three in each category and then keep expanding until you have written down everything you need to be toad-free. I’ve included a handy Tackling Your Toads worksheet to get you started. Just focus on completing the first and second columns; I’ll explain the next three columns in Tips #2 and #3.

- Toads at work
- Toads from your Board of Directors, colleagues, manager or employees
- Toads resulting from your clients or suppliers
- Toads at home
- Toads to do with your family, partner or spouse, and friends
- Finance-related toads
- Toads to do with your physical and/or mental health
- Spirituality-related toads
- Toads to do with nutrition
- Vehicle-related toads
- Toads to do with your past
- Toads to do with your future
- Things that frustrate you and/or keep you awake at night

Next, count your toads. If you’ve never dealt with your procrastination issues, you will likely have 20 to 30 toads so don’t be shocked at the size of your list. I actually believe that you should take the number you come up with initially and multiply by 3 to 5 to create your real list of toads because there will always be more toads than you initially think.

One tip I use for coming up with a list of toads: use the rule of three. If you have thought about something you need to do more than three times, it’s a toad.
# Tackling Your Toads Worksheet

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name the Toad</th>
<th>Why is it a Toad?</th>
<th>Do it / Don’t Do it / Delegate it / Delete it</th>
<th>Date It</th>
<th>C.I.O.</th>
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2. START NOW WITH THE 5 Ds TO LICK YOUR TOADS

THE 5 Ds
1. Do it
2. Don’t do it
3. Delegate it
4. Date it
5. Delete it

1. Do it. Just commit to getting it done; these ones must absolutely be done by you.

2. Don’t do it. Do you know someone who is phenomenal at delegating toads to you? It’s not like you don’t have enough of your own already but then what happens? You say “thank you” and offer to help. To get through your own list of toads, you have to be discerning about what you do for other people. Just say “no.”

3. Delegate it. Sometimes we get stuck in the procrastination rut because we take on tasks we feel we must do ourselves or that we don’t feel are fair to delegate to others. The problem is that these tasks zap our energy and in the end take far longer than if we just delegated in the first place.

Consider clutter – if you don’t want to commit to conquering clutter, what are you going to do? Option A could be to keep procrastinating (because getting organized is just not your strength), never making a dent in the clutter, which will just lower your self-esteem. Or, Option B could be to hire a professional (there are lots of highly qualified people who love organizing) who could set up systems and processes to keep you organized.

Delegating is a very powerful way to get more done so that you can stay focused on the things you love. The key is finding the people who love what you loathe. Remember: one person’s junk is another’s treasure – this is true with tasks!
Here’s another example; spending 30 minutes surfing the Internet for a hotel for an upcoming business trip is not nearly as important as asking a high value customer for feedback on your products and services. Your assistant can easily take care of booking travel so that you can stay focused on driving your business forward. Other ways you can use your support systems at work effectively include:

- Letting your assistant sift through and deal with the majority of your phone calls, voice messages and email rather than doing this yourself;
- Giving your clients and high value contacts a special number to reach you directly;
- Engaging someone on your team to proof important documents; and
- Trusting people to take action even if it means they make mistakes – we all learn by making mistakes in the process.

Letting go of administrative tasks will not only help you be more productive but it will also make someone else feel important because they are helping you. And for high performing CEOs and executives, your time is far better spent focused on activities that drive your business forward.

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” – Theodore Roosevelt

Now take your Tackling Your Toads list and use the following table on page 16 to make sure you are doing what you love. Compare it with your lists of toads. Are there any more toads on your list that you should delegate?
4. **Delete it.** The list of things that just fill up time and space – and stress us out – is huge and most of it we don’t need. For example, the stacks of magazines that you have no time to read. Why not just send the pile off for recycling? Odds are you are not going to read through a stack of magazines and in the meantime it will just drive you nuts every time you look at it. In fact, although I love magazines, I cancelled all my subscriptions because I never had the time to read them. Your email inbox could likely use the same strategy too. How many unnecessary emails are you keeping? Why not clear up some of this digital clutter?

5. **Date it.** I am cautious when I talk to procrastinators about this “D” because dating it means deciding to do it at a later date. Some people say, “Perfect, I will just date everything and deal with it in a few months.” This “D” is for projects that you want to do but you don’t have time for now. Put a date on it, “I am going to start this in March” so that you are still accountable to it.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>I DON’T LIKE DOING AND TYPICALLY PROCRASTINATE</th>
<th>WHO CAN HELP ME OR DO I NEED TO FIND SOMEONE TO GET IT DONE?</th>
<th>I LOVE DOING (AND WILL KEEP)</th>
<th>HOW CAN I DO MORE OF THIS?</th>
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3. MAKE YOUR CIO LIST

Many people prioritize their tasks and projects using the ABC system; yet, this system doesn’t really work for me, or many of my clients. Instead, I use the CIO system:

- **Critical** items that have the highest priority for you to complete. Spend 80 per cent of your time focused here because they drive results in your business and life.

- **Important** items that will help you move forward but should largely be delegated. You should spend only 15 per cent of your time on Important items.

- **Optional** items. Only 5 per cent of your time, or less should be spent on optional items. These should be delegated.

People can get focused on doing a project that is not required for months, instead of doing something that was due yesterday. This is an easy trap to fall into, particularly if the project is complex or requires great effort or tough decisions.

The CIO system has helped many people I know commit to getting the critical things done first and then the important and optional ones (the latter if necessary). In fact, if you never get to the optional items, you are doing very well. The best results are definitely achieved by completing all the critical items and will return the best results for your time and effort spent.

This is why I find making lists to be valuable and I’m not just talking about grocery lists. Using the **Tackling Your Toads** worksheet, assign your “Do it” toads to a CIO category. Pick your top ten to complete within the next ten days. Commit to working through your C (critical) list each day before any of the actions on your I (important) or O (optional) lists.
4. LICK YOUR NASTIEST TOAD FIRST THING EACH MORNING

“Putting off an easy thing makes it hard. Putting off a hard thing makes it impossible.”
– George Claude Lorimer

This is the simplest and most powerful way to overcome procrastination – period. In fact, I use this technique with my clients all the time and it makes a huge difference. Practice this daily and watch how your days become dramatically different. At the end of each day, ask yourself, “What’s the nastiest toad I have tomorrow?” Then, decide the night before exactly how you are going to conquer it.

Don’t check your voice mail, email or regular mail until you have your first toad of the day licked. Don’t chat with your co-workers, surf the Internet, check your social network sites or read the news – avoid all distractions and get your slimy toad done and off your mind.

You will be amazed at the increase in your personal productivity and the reduction in your stress. The toughest part of your day is over and now you can focus on the future. And if you don’t tackle that one nasty, ugly toad first thing, it will just be there to haunt you all throughout the day, regardless of how much you try to avoid it.
5. MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS TODAY

Most people fear making tough decisions and in the process, avoid thinking about them for weeks, months or even years. What happens as a result? It rolls around in our head, causes knots in our stomach and distracts us; yet, we continue to avoid making the decision and as a result go nuts in the process.

Indecision is like slamming the brakes on progress. It causes stress and holds us back from getting more of what we want and deserve in our lives. And what happens when you finally conquer tough decisions? Most people breathe a sigh of relief and in hindsight realize that the decision wasn’t as tough as originally thought.

Making tough decisions is not something to fear; instead, if you continually make tough decisions, you will find that you will minimize your fear and build up resilience, which means that dealing with tough decisions will become routine.

For example, if your employees are embroiled in conflict on a project, you can either let the conflict continue – which may be detrimental if it’s toxic versus healthy conflict – or you can decide to step in and resolve the situation. If you fear conflict and the possibility of being dragged into the middle, you’ll likely avoid the situation all-together, which could easily result in less than optimal outcomes. However, if you step in to help the parties resolve the matter, you’ll demonstrate leadership and keep the project moving forward. Doing this over and over will make it easier for you to identify and provide solutions when future conflicts arise – far more than if you neglected making the tough decision in the first place. Plus, you will have created way more movement, learning and progress for you and your employees.

“You may delay, but time will not.” – Benjamin Franklin
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<tr>
<th>TOUGH DECISION YOU NEED TO MAKE</th>
<th>WHY IS IT TOUGH?</th>
<th>YOUR PREFERRED DECISION IS...</th>
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6. GET OFF EMAIL

Email can help us save time and be more productive, but when we go on email autopilot – checking our inbox repeatedly, typing out messages rather than engaging in conversations, copying people who are only peripherally involved along with a host of other bad habits – email can make us more busy than productive. Get smart with these email habits:

- Turn off the audio alert for your inbox and stay focused rather than being constantly distracted.
- Check email two to four times per day; have your colleagues call you directly if something urgent arises.
- For each email you have five choices: handle immediately, forward/delegate, file, flag for later follow-up, or delete. Do not let messages pile up in your inbox to be ignored.
- If you want someone to take action, address the message to that specific person. Only cc someone if they need to be aware of the information you are sending.
- Email is intended to be short – one idea per paragraph and no more than two or three paragraphs. Clearly specify the response you want – phone call, follow-up, review or meeting.
- Use the subject line to inform the recipient about the message content, level of urgency and response required.
- Ban the use of email for messages that say: “I got it” or “thanks.”
- Establish a corporate-wide email retention/deletion policy.
- Do not write an email if it is faster to pick up the phone.
- Avoid expressing anger or chastising someone; pick up the phone or discuss face-to-face.

“I have yet to see a job description that says ‘must have high competency in responding to email.’ People are not hired to respond to email, yet their lives become burdened by their inbox.” – Kevin Lawrence
7. CLOSE THE DOOR AND LOCK IT TIGHT

“What do I mean by concentration? I mean focusing totally on the business at hand and commanding your body to do exactly what you want it to do.” – Arnold Palmer, American golfer

Constant interruptions can derail the best efforts to eliminate toads so don’t be caught in the distraction trap. Schedule regular power-blocks or closed-door sessions once a week (or for first time procrastination-busters once a day) where your sole focus is eliminating toads. Have your assistant answer all calls and let your family know that you are not to be disturbed except for emergencies. You will be amazed at what you can accomplish!

When are you blocking an hour a day to get your critical things done?
8. STOP HORDING. PURGE UNNECESSARY STUFF

If you ever doubt the impact that clutter has in our lives just watch A&E’s Hoarders, a show that takes a look inside the lives of people whose lives are consumed by stuff. It’s a shocking picture of people practically on the verge of a personal crisis that not only impacts them individually, but also their loved ones.

We seem to be living in a clutter society with the belief that more is better. Our parents used to live in their houses for decades; now we feel we are only successful when we buy a bigger house. But what happens? We just end up filling it up with more clutter. I am always amazed when I drive through a neighborhood and look into people’s garages in North America; there are no cars parked, just lots and lots of stuff. And probably stuff they never use!

Clutter takes up valuable space physically and mentally, making it challenging to focus on the things that move you forward in life and business. It also follows you around mentally like the toads I mentioned, never giving you the space you need to envision a clear path forward. And for those who keep saying they are time starved, a study conducted for the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) indicated that 96 per cent of the 400 people surveyed said they could save time every day if they were more organized at home.\(^5\) NAPO also suggests that people waste an hour each day searching for lost items or working in ways that are not productive.\(^6\)


This disorganization is costing you. How much are you paying in extra fees because you’ve lost bills that are now overdue? Not only is clutter taking away valuable time, it’s costing us. Commit to cutting clutter by:

• Eliminating half the paper in your office and home
• Completing half the projects on your project list
• Cleaning up, or out, half the rooms in your house
• Giving away or selling half of your clothes, toys, books and stuff you rarely use

What unnecessary things are taking up valuable space in your work and personal life?

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9. LET GO OF COOL IDEAS

All too often I see people become distracted by cool or innovative ideas that provide little or no value to the company. Now, I’m not saying that companies shouldn’t incubate new ideas, but they have to contribute to your strategic plan and purpose, not detract from it.

If you are floating amidst lots of cool, innovative ideas, write them all down. Then pick the top three that will give you the most valuable return and commit to getting those ideas implemented. When those three are done, look at your list again (add new ideas) and once again select the top three. This ensures you stay focused on the high value ideas and innovations, rather than getting caught up on a plethora of cool things that never move you or your company forward. Plus it ensures that you allocate energy towards the top projects, rather than spreading it too thinly among many.

“Ideas without action are worthless.” – Helen Keller
10. STOP WAITING FOR BETTER OPTIONS – OR AT LEAST USING THAT AS AN EXCUSE

“Everything will be better when....” How many times have you said this yourself? We are always trying to convince ourselves that life will be better when this or that changes. We convince ourselves that we’ll be happy when we make more money, or acquire another company. Or perhaps it’s a new job (and for those with jobs, it’s when you retire). Life will certainly be better when you move to a bigger home. And then after you move, you convince yourself that you will be happy when you pay off your mortgage.

The truth is there’s no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always be filled with challenges. It’s best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy regardless. In fact, treasure every moment you have – and make sure you treasure your loved ones too at the same time.

You have to stop waiting....

- Until you complete the acquisition
- Until you hire an all-star executive
- Until you make another million
- Until your kids leave the house
- Until your home is paid off
- Until spring, summer, winter or fall
- Until you lose 10 lbs
- Until you gain 10 lbs
- Until you get married
- Until you have kids
- Until you have more money
- Until you retire

Work and live like you don’t need money, approval or other rewards...do what you really want today and tomorrow. Happiness is a journey, not a destination.

Look at your Tackling Your Toads worksheet; what are three things you can do right now?
“I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward. ”

– Nelson Mandela
11. STOP ALWAYS TRYING TO HELP

I often find that many people who are bogged down by toads are stretched too thin for time because they have overcommitted in a well-intentioned way to colleagues, friends and family. This can be a BIG problem because nothing is worse than promising to do something for someone, only to fail on delivering what you promised. If this resembles you, say NO to all future commitments until you can rein in your life. And if you can, try and find a way to undo any commitments you have made that you need to fulfill on in the days and months ahead. This includes:

- Taking on a critical project at work that will only cause you to fail delivering on the ones you have in progress. In my experience, it’s far better to come up with an alternative plan than it is to fail miserably because you are so overloaded with work with not enough effort or time to get things done.
- Saying no to attending galas and charity events until you have time to fit them in your schedule.
- Resisting the opportunity to volunteer on another non-profit board. No one wins if you sit on a board that you don’t have enough time for.
- Letting someone else host the annual family dinners.

Lending a helping hand is important, but your colleagues, friends and family will honestly understand if you tell them you are too overloaded to take on another project or initiative. Remember when you say “yes” to something, someone or something else gets a “no”.
12. BE WILLING TO MAKE MISTAKES

Chronic procrastinators often fear making mistakes, which then hinders them from taking any action at all. Failure is life’s lesson and yet it’s interesting how many people want to avoid learning this way. To be successful in life we need to take chances but expect to make mistakes. And, the more mistakes you make, the better your chances of success.

The most successful business leaders on the planet did not become successful overnight nor did they do so without taking a chance or making mistakes. Often we are so enamored with the story of their current success that we forget to peel back the layers to learn about all the obstacles they had to overcome, both in business and in life. Lance Armstrong, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates – they’re all human, and so are you, so give yourself permission to make a mistake or two.

“Success tends to go not to the person who is error-free, because he also tends to be risk-averse. Rather it goes to the person who recognizes that life is pretty much a percentage business. It isn’t making mistakes that’s critical, it’s correcting them and getting on with the principal task.” - Donald Rumsfeld
“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and Third by experience, which is the bitterest.”

– Confucius
13. DON’T WAIT UNTIL IT’S BROKEN

“The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” - John F. Kennedy

There is great wisdom in being proactive. Why wait to fix problems when things are broken? For example, why wait to see a marriage counselor when you are thinking of divorce, or do a personal budget when you are broke, maintain a car only when it breaks down, or take care of your house when things start falling apart? This is a sure fire way to pay more money, cause more stress for yourself and propagate the creation of more toads.

Don’t wait to react to circumstances; proactively solve them before they surface. Highly successful people believe in preventative maintenance; it avoids drama, which tends to happen at the most inconvenient times. Are you a maintainer or a fixer? What future toads can you proactively identify now? Add these to your Tackling Your Toads list.
Life continuously creates toads for us so it’s crucial that you set up systems and processes to keep the Magic of Action happening. The **first stage** of the Magic of Action is making your toad list, understanding your list, and then conquering it to clear out the backlog. **Stage two** is setting up strategies, systems and processes so that you are continuously staying on top of your toads and moving forward to win; not to mention helping those around you do the same.

Here are some examples of strategies, systems and processes that have proven successful with clients:

1. **The ten-day challenge**: have your team make a procrastination list, assign joint and individual accountability and then do a status check everyday. Celebrate at the end of ten days if the list is complete.

2. **Create toad elimination days**: everyone meets at 8:00 am to agree on the top ten procrastination items that will get done that day. Check in at noon and then check in again at 5:00. If the list is complete, celebrate!

3. **Create quarterly or monthly themes**: Complete a thorough department or company review of all the outstanding toads and then commit everyone to getting them done. Create a Toad Master – someone responsible for providing regular updates on the progress of action items.

4. **Divide and conquer**: Everyone loves a juicy challenge. Create an equally distributed procrastination list and divide it between two work teams. Give them a deadline and then reward the team that completes the list first.

5. **Think small and focused**: Employees can be overwhelmed by sizable projects with far-off deadlines, which only fosters procrastination. Instead, create concrete milestones to help encourage employees and give them a sense of ongoing progress.
As you are setting up systems, it’s important to distinguish between tasks and toads. **Tasks** are actions you should do; **Toads** are problems, issues and situations you would prefer to avoid but must eventually deal with. While clearing out toads can be hugely rewarding in terms of productivity, sometimes the only value of licking a toad is to get it out of your way. There may be no financial benefit from completing it but it will certainly free up your mental bandwidth because it is no longer bogging you down.
15. CELEBRATE – YOU’RE ON YOUR WAY TO BECOMING A TOAD MASTER

Dealing with your problems head-on – or licking your toads – will teach you that anticipation is usually much worse than just licking. Most of the time, licking your toads isn’t as nasty as you’d thought; it may even leave you feeling relieved and energized. Following a process to lick your toads whenever they arise will also inspire you with new and invigorating projects because inevitably a few exciting things will come out of the swamp.

Once you are licking your toads regularly and without apprehension, the law of inertia – objects in motion tend to stay in motion – takes over, propelling you forward of its own accord. This positive momentum fueled by an upward spiral of action is a sure path to better results, happiness and success. To summarize the process to help you lick your toads and achieve better results in life, here are eight steps to follow:

1. Identify your toads: the big and little things you are avoiding or putting off.
2. Acknowledge why you haven’t taken action…yet.
3. Realize how you will benefit from getting them done and the cost of continuing to procrastinate.
4. Divide the task into manageable steps with deadlines.
5. Commit fully to completing the task by the deadline: Don’t say, “I’ll try.
6. Get help and support – get more than you think you need.
7. Start Licking!
8. Celebrate success and reward yourself.

Tackling toads is not a one-time event but with ongoing effort and practice, you will certainly find that with the Magic of Action you have fewer toads bogging you down.
THE NEXT 72 HOURS

Inspired?
Write down your toads, in business and in life, now.

Motivated?
Start with the 5 Ds. Do it, Don’t do it, Delegate, Delete and Date it.

Determined?
Pick your top ten to complete within the next ten days.

Be bold. Be outrageous.
Get what you really want now!
Kevin Lawrence is a strategic advisor and coach to CEOs and executive teams across North America and internationally. Driven by a relentless passion for helping business leaders get what they really want, in business and life, Kevin has coached clients across a wide range of industries, including consumer packaged goods, manufacturing, luxury retail, media, automotive and professional services. He deeply believes that CEOs and entrepreneurs can have tremendous business success along with an enriching, adventurous and fulfilling lifestyle, taking their professional and personal accomplishments to an entirely new level. For more information, visit www.CoachKevin.com

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